

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 433

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Secretary:

15 Bellara Crescent
REALBA Vic 3021

August 7th 2003

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family & Community Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Equal Custody for Mothers and Fathers

I am **strongly opposed** to any law being passed granting parents equal custody of children, and also believe that the one-day per week access should be discontinued.

Neither is in the best interests of the child.

Children need a place which they can call **home**. Most of the children are young and by nature, the woman is the nurturer. They should not have to distinguish between Mum's house, Dad's house, or even Our house as suggested by the media. Children, especially the young ones, have enough to think about with school and extra-curricular activities, without having to remember whose turn it is to stay with whom.

The only time that this might work is in the case of older children who have already lived some time with both parents and therefore have some basis on which to base their decision and preference. As stated in the *Herald Sun* June 19th 2003, the option of having joint custody was already available subject to agreement by both parties.

As for shared care, has anyone given any thought to the myriad, small, practical details such as bedding, changes of clothing, school books being transferred from one household to the other, the provision of clean, ironed clothes for school each day, the equipment and clothing needed for extra-curricular activities, not to mention the mending etc etc.? In practical terms, can we assume that fathers will also carry out these tasks?

Your government maintains that:

1. There are too many children without a father figure.

Have you given any thought to:

- a. Who brought in 'Irreconcilable Differences' as a valid reason for the dissolution of marriages, enabling people to walk in and out of marriage and now, de facto relationships?
 - b. Why is there a serious shortage of male teachers in both primary and secondary schools?
 - c. Children have friends and relatives who are adult males.
2. It will cut down single parent payments.
 - a. Mothers are owed many thousands of dollars by fathers who are adept at hiding their assets.

- b. Men give up well-paying jobs and claim the dole and custody of their children on the pretext that they will be the primary care-givers while the mother goes to work. Of course, generally women's jobs are not as high paying as men's, therefore two are collecting payments. The mother pays the father, and he of course manages a cash-in-hand job which are still obtainable.
 - c. Businessmen can request a redundancy payout then claim the child. In the meantime they can work for themselves and keep two sets of books (you are well aware that this happens). They claim single parent payments and if the mother works, she has to pay the father. Either way, you pay single parent payments.
 - d. Rather than mitigating existing problems, it will further encourage abuse of the Social Welfare system.
3. Mothers and fathers will never be civil together; that is why they are apart.
 - a. No court order can impose harmony on a relationship. On a lighter note, even the sitting members of Parliament are unable to demonstrate civility during a parliamentary session.
4. Even without an Equal Custody Act, males are in a position of control over women. Men involved in any custody issues are usually in a better financial position and wear women down either by threatening, or taking, court action knowing full well that because of the woman's inferior financial position, she is in fact denied equality at law.
5. Once a woman has a baby even by accident (the man did not use contraceptives despite being requested to do so), she is subject to the man's control. She cannot make decisions, travel when she wants, enrol the child in schools or activities, make decisions or take action in anything involving the child unless she lets the male know of her intentions. In the meantime, no maintenance is being paid by the father - but 'Hey, it's my child!'
6. I thought surrogacy was illegal. Why does a man get a woman pregnant and maintain he wants nothing to do with the child? Then, when the child is 2 months old, the father suddenly has an urge to see his offspring. Finding the child happy, healthy and thriving, (and a boy - almost a designer baby!) he then suddenly develops a strong attachment and wants 50/50 custody rights. Being financially much better off than the mother, he plans to go for full custody rights when the child is 4-years-old; after all, he can afford court and knows that she cannot. Such men should opt for an IVF baby. They can pay a woman \$20,000 - \$30,000 plus medical expenses. Such men need a baby-maker!
7. Politicians examined European Child Parenting Matters to see how they worked. In England, a man who **casually** gets a woman pregnant (as in 6/) has no rights. As you are trying to institute a half-half arrangement as they have in Europe, are you also going to give these 'casual impregnators' no rights?
8. Some men use maternal alienation to gain control of the children and to isolate and punish the mother. Unfortunately, those who are in a position of power with the ability to exercise control over others often speak logically and articulately, and hence their case often appears more credible. These tactics are often used in court processes to determine contact and living arrangements.

9. Women feel enormous grief and pain at "losing their child/children". They feel trapped and powerless.

I beg you to strongly reconsider the proposal to legislate for 50/50 custody of children, and to consider removing the one-day per week access as it is far too disruptive to children, particularly the very young. These serve the interests of the parents, not of the child.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'June Page', written in a cursive style.

Ms June Page